On that day in December, the toy dealer Carl Weaver had had his usual stress. He had been delivered purple rocking horses, although pink ones were in fashion this year. Impatient people had lined up in front of the cash register. Barbies and teddy bears, picture books and computer games, all had to be wrapped up nicely with Christmas wrapping paper and red and gold ribbon.

When Carl finally arrived home long after closing time, he sank exhausted into his recliner to read the newspaper.

His daughter came and wanted to play with him. She hadn't seen him all day and had been nagging her mother for a while with her "When is Daddy finally coming home?"

To keep the child occupied, Carl took a page out of the newspaper. It showed a map of the world. On it were marked the disasters, the places where there had been famines or terrorist attacks during the year, as well as tanker accidents, floods, and forest fires. The map showed the trouble spots, countries where, even during Advent, soldiers were shooting at people, tanks destroyed villages, and airplanes dropped bombs on the towns.

Carl tore this sheet into small pieces. He told his daughter: "Here you have a puzzle. Try to put this world back in order."

Carl now turned to the rest of the paper. But he could not read in peace for long. After only a few minutes, the little girl came back to show her father the finished map.

Carl's curiosity was stronger than his displeasure at the renewed disturbance. The father asked his child how she had done it so quickly.

"Very simple," the daughter replied. "There was a person on the back of the world map. All I had to do was put the human in order, and the world was right again."

After an old wandering Xerox, retold by Lorenz Derungs
Illustration: Courtesy of the artist Hans Fitze - www.hansfitze.ch